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Contents

EARLY MERCHANDIZING IN YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN
A Symposium arranged by Louis S. White, Ypsilanti City Historian

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I. REMARKS ACCOMPANYING FOURTEEN LANTERN SLIDES

By Louis S. White
Ypsilanti City Historian

One of the most important factors in the material development and progress of any community is transportation. That was particularly true in the pioneer days in this section when highways were hallucinations drawn sketchily upon maps by enterprising promoters, and the forests were indeed primeval. Into and through the bogs and morasses and "oak openings" came steam in the form of iron horses travelling upon strap rails of "snake head" fame and drawing magnificent coaches of cold comfort and no springs.

Politics, that science by which the locations of cities and the fates of nations are decided, ordained that, of the three trans-Michigan routes bandied about among the members of our territorial legislative council, the Central route should survive. The Central Rail Road of Michigan was built by the State of Michigan as far as Kalamazoo. The first train arrived in Ypsilanti February 8, 1838, and was the occasion of much huzzawing and eating of barbecued beef, topped off with a welcoming speech by our own General Van Fossen. Ypsilanti was for a time the outfitting place for prospectors, settlers, and their satellites, adventurers and gamblers.

Michigan Central Depot 1865

The town grew, industries came, and business so increased that by 1864 it became necessary to replace the frame depot with something more commodious. The old structure was sold to a doctor, who cut it in two and used each part as the nucleus for a dwelling. The new depot was of brick, three stories high, and provided living quarters for the agent and his family in the upper floors. A glance at the interior, even today, shows the substantial material used and the high quality of workmanship prevalent in those days. Fire ruined the upper part of

the building on May 28, 1910, and it was then reduced in height, part of the tower being retained. On August 10, 1939, one of the cars in an eastbound freight train left its trucks near Forest Avenue. The body of the car bounced along the tracks until it neared the depot, when it left the train, struck the depot, veered around a signal pole without touching it, and came to rest against the express office. The next day the wrecking crane deposited the remnants of the tower across the tracks where it leaned disconsolately upon one corner until demolished and carted away. One interesting feature of the depot grounds is the small triangular piece of ground along River Street. This was once dedicated as "Cass Plot" in honor of Lewis Cass, through the efforts of Mrs. Florence S. Babbitt of blessed memory. The ground now serves as a children's playground, possibly a better use. The old locomotive in the picture is of a type unidentified by the Mechanical Department of the Railroad. They say it was of British manufacture and never used by the Michigan Central, yet -- there it stands.

Depot Business Section 1859

The depot section in 1859 was, from a business standpoint, on a par with if not more important than the west or up-town district. It was only the year before that East and West Ypsilanti, separate corporate bodies and bitter commercial rivals, had buried their differences and emerged as the unified and chartered City of Ypsilanti. The Follett Block, containing Follett Hall and Follett Hotel, was located here. Its builder was Benjamin Follett, son-in-law of Mark Noris, and himself prominent politically, socially, and commercially. Dark and sinister tales are hinted at concerning an underground passage which supposedly led from the Follett residence on River Street to the rear of the building.

Steam Motor Train 1893

The first trip of the steam motor was made on Friday, January 19, 1891. It started with a round trip every two hours to the Ann Arbor city limits where connection was made with the Ann Arbor electric cars. Two weeks later arrangements were completed so that the steam motor ran direct to the court house. The fare was 10 cents one way, 20 cents for the round trip. The 16-ton motor hauled two loaded cars with ease. As many as 150 passengers were carried on a single trip. Soon the schedule was shortened to one round trip every hour and a half. The astonishing success of the venture stimulated discussion of lines to Plymouth, Denton, Belleville, Willis, Milan, and Saline. There is no doubt that this method of transportation satisfied a need, but six years (lacking two months) later the steam motor made its last trip. As is the case with any newly laid track, the company was plagued at first with many derailments and accidents, some rather ludicrous and some serious. During the first year of operation, traffic would be suspended for days at a time while the motive power was used to haul ballast to anchor the track so the passengers could be hauled in safety.

Electric Car 1897

The electric car made its first scheduled trip to Ann Arbor on Thursday, November 26, 1896, supplanting the steam motor. An agreement was consummated in August, 1896, consolidating the Ann Arbor Street Railway Company and the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Street Railway Company, the new company to be known as the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Electric Street Railway. John Winter of Detroit became president, H. P. Glover of Ypsilanti, vice-president, J. E. Beal of Ann Arbor, secretary, C. E. Hiscock of Ann Arbor, treasurer, and the directors were D. L. Quirk of Ypsilanti, Oliver D. Law of Detroit, and F. H. C. Reynolds of Boston. As the popularity of interurban service spread, a line was built out of Detroit westward, first to Dearborn, then to Ypsilanti, where it absorbed the existing line to Ann Arbor, and thence to Jackson. The line was variously known as the Detroit, Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, and Jackson Railway; the Detroit, Jackson & Chicago Railway; and finally as a part of the huge Detroit United Lines System.

Congress Street Bridge 1869

It is said that the first bridge across the Huron River in Washtenaw County was erected by John Bryan in Ypsilanti in 1827 at Congress Street (now Michigan Avenue). The bridge pictured was built in the summer of 1868, and first used December 3 by driving 60 tons of stone across. It was replaced in January, 1893, by a Pratt truss bridge, erected by the Detroit Bridge & Iron Works. This bridge was built as a draw-bridge. When the electric line crossed it, it was necessary to strengthen the stone abutments. It was at this point that Governor Stevens T. Mason was stopped by officers enforcing the quarantine during the "Cholera War" of 1832. He was travelling from Detroit westward and had no notion of being delayed by the village of Ypsilanti; so he detoured around the town, crossing on the next bridge upstream. As he reentered the town, he was promptly arrested and allowed to proceed only after much argument and showing of authority. One result was that the Ypsilanti sheriff was very shortly replaced by an Ann Arbor man.

Ypsilanti City Mill

The Ypsilanti City Mill, as it was generally known, was built by Mark Norris in April, 1838. Mr. Norris later took his son-in-law, Benjamin Follett, into the business with him. By 1866 both gentlemen had passed on and the property was disposed of to Eber B. Ward, of Detroit. In 1875, Wm. Deubel & Company acquired the mill, the name later becoming the Deubel Milling Company. For a great part of its existence this mill specialized in custom milling and thus attracted farmers from the surrounding country-side and those of the near-by stores. Following the Deubels, Messrs. Wm. H. Yerkes and J. Trufant carried on the business. The last operator was the Ypsilanti Grain & Elevator Company. In 1925, E. S. Chipman purchased the property, razed the old mill, and used the lumber in constructing dwellings. One little-known fact is that the mill stood at the corner of Cross & Rice Streets. Rice Street was named for R. N. Rice, former Superintendent of the Michigan Central.

Huron Mills

The Huron Mill was built by William Webb Harwood, one of three proprietors of the original plat of Ypsilanti Village, in 1829. The dam was erected by Mark Norris and Mr. Harwood. In 1835, the water power passed into the hands of John Gilbert, who in 1839 gave a half interest to his son-in-law, Abel Goddard. Mr. Goddard was the second president of Ypsilanti Village, in 1834-35, his father-

in-law having been the first. Gilbert & Goddard soon sold to Alfred D. Hunter. The mill then passed into the hands of assignees and was run by lessees until 1854, when it was sold to Nathan Follett and Alexander Ross. Nathan Follett, father of Benjamin Follett, had recently moved from Batavia, New York. He had been one of the principals in the Morgan anti-Masonic trouble at Batavia in 1826. He died October 14, 1875, in Ypsilanti, and was buried in Batavia. On April 10, 1873, William H. and James P. Deubel, sons of William Deubel, bought the mill from Mr. Follett for $19,000 cash. The Deubels were experienced and energetic millers and soon instituted a system of selling direct to jobbers, thus eliminating the middleman's profit. They were the first millers in the state to adopt this system. The building was 44 x 70 ft., 4½ stories high, with a warehouse 40 x 30 ft. The mill burned about 1910.

Woolen Mill 1870

Early in 1865, the newly organized Ypsilanti Woolen Manufacturing Company constructed a five-story brick factory on the site of the old Eagle Mill, near the west end of the Forest Avenue bridge. The company, capitalized at $100,000, was composed of Isaac N. Conklin, Daniel L. Quirk, Clark Cornwell, A. Dow, M. L. Shutts, Mrs. Elvira Follett, widow of Benjamin Follett, and S. Botsford. The intent of the company was to manufacture woolen blankets for the army, the price then being $2 per yard. With the close of the war the price soon dropped to $1 per yard, and the manufacture of blankets became unprofitable. The company never declared a dividend and the stockholders dropped out, one by one. The property lay idle a few years and was finally bid in at a low valuation by Messrs. Quirk and Isaac N. Conklin, and sold by them in 1875 to Hay, Wing & Todd. Mr. Wing retired at the close of that year, and Hay and Todd continued until 1883, when the business was incorporated as the Hay & Todd Manufacturing Company. They manufactured woolen yarns and knitted goods until 1889, when underwear became the sole article made. In February, 1893, Messrs. Hay & Todd retired and the new officers became D. L. Quirk, president; J. B. Colvan, vice-president; and H. B. Adams, secretary-treasurer. The last occupant of the building was the Ray Battery Co., manufacturer of automobile storage batteries. The structure was razed about 1925, having been declared a menace to public safety.

H.R.Scovill Lumber Yard 1895

The Scovill Lumber Yard, on Frog Island, has an interesting history which will be discussed later in the program by Mr. Scovill's son-in-law, Mr. Herbert A. Bisbee.

Atlantis Mineral Well

Tubal Cain Owen came to Ypsilanti in 1873 and bought what became known as the Owen property on West Forest Avenue, in 1879. About 1884 his Atlantis Mineral Well was put down about 360 feet back from Forest Avenue, near the northwest corner of the east wing of the present Roosevelt High School. The well, which was 808 feet deep, produced a mildly purgative water, strong in bromine. The trade name for it was "Paragon." It was bottled and sold throughout the United States and even abroad. The slogan used in advertising was "A wine-glass full, three times a day." A soap was manufactured which was said to be very beneficial to the skin. A medicinal salt was also sold, from which by following directions the mineral water could be recreated. To help along with the advertising, a star baseball team carried the name Atlantis.

C.L.Yost Store — Chester Leslie Yost was born in Waterloo, New York, March 10, 1838, and came to Ypsilanti in 1855, aged 17 years. His family became very prominent in Ypsilanti affairs and he himself was a man of many interests and varied activities. He served the city several terms as alderman and as mayor. He was an auctioneer, operated a livery stable, and made and sold harnesses and leather goods. The location of his store in the late 1870's was a few doors west of Huron Street on the south side of Congress Street (now Michigan Avenue) I endeavored to locate the store in this picture by finding upper windows with the same ornamentation but had no luck, as so many store fronts have been changed. Finally I discovered that the store fronts across the street are reflected in the windows of Mr. Yost's store. I noted the reflected sign of W. T. Butler's Tonsorial Parlors, located Mr. Butler's place in the directory of that period, and thus determined where Yost's store must have been.

Ypsilanti City Water Tower 1893 — Although not in the field of merchandizing, nevertheless the Water Tower dispensed an article we cannot do without. This edifice is a famous land-mark and has probably been one of the most photographed subjects in the city. It was built in July, 1889, and consists of an elevated reservoir of 250,000 gallons capacity, resting upon a stone tower 85 feet high. It is placed upon the highest eminence in the city, and gives a head of 125 feet pressure in the business district and about 100 feet in the College district. The first connection with the new city water plant was made at the residence of Clark Cornwell on River Street. The cupola which formerly adorned the top of the tower and also the balcony have now been removed.

Home of John Bryan 1827 — John Bryan, one of the first six householders to settle at Woodruff's Grove in 1823, was born February 1, 1794, at West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and died November 2, 1864, at Constantine, Michigan. He was a carpenter and builder, and erected the first court house in Ann Arbor. His seventh child born February 27, 1824, at Woodruff's Grove, was named Alpha Washtenaw Bryan, in honor of being the first white child born in this county. The house in this picture, built about 1827, has lately been known as "The Plank Road Tavern." I doubt if it was ever used as a tavern, except in modern times; in fact a lady whose family had lived in the house many years recently objected vehemently to calling it a tavern, declaring that it has always been simply a residence. Alpha W. Bryan died at San Marcos, Texas, in 1904.

Octagon House — William McAndrew was born in Perth, Scotland, in 1824. His good wife, Helen Walker, also a native of Scotland, was known as a woman of restless energy and strong convictions. She was a woman's-suffrage, anti-slavery, and temperance worker. In a day when women doctors were frowned upon by the medical profession, she attended a Hydropathic Institute in the East, graduating in 1855. Her husband built the famous octagon house in Ypsilanti in 1853-54, and here Dr. Helen McAndrew practiced, treating patients by hydro-therapy in bath-houses erected between the house and the river. This house, on S. Huron St., is now the home of Henry M. Frain.

MACK & MACK FURNITURE STORE
By Atwood R. McAndrew

William McAndrew was born in Perth, Scotland, November 28, 1924, and died in Ypsilanti, Michigan, October 22, 1895. He was a cabinet maker by trade in the old country, and in the course of his work met Helen Walker, a young girl working in a book-binding establishment. They were married in 1849, and at once started for New York the long, hard way,- a six-weeks trip in the steerage of a sailing vessel. After a brief residence in Baltimore, they came to Detroit. In this big city, the very first year, he lost his precious box of tools that he had carried with him across the ocean. This determined him to leave Detroit, and he was advised to try Rawsonville, at that time a thriving town, with two stave mills, a flour mill, a woolen mill, a distillery, and a hotel. Here he worked for William Burke, making wooden furniture, butter bowls, beds, and wash-stands. It was not long before he moved to Ypsilanti, and here his two sons were born, Thomas W. on June 24, 1852, and William, August 20, 1863. Their first home was at 16 S. Huron, but in 1853 and '54 the well-known octagon house* was built at 105 S. Huron. Tom now lives at 301 S. Washington Street. William was the school-teacher of the family, serving as Superintendent of Chicago Schools; he died June 27, 1937.

Changes in the firm name and make-up proceeded, from the beginning, as follows: In 1863 it was composed of Captain Stanley and Wm. McAndrew, furniture and undertaking, at 125 W. Michigan. In 1864, Wm. Clarke bought out Stanley, and the firm name became McAndrew and Clarke. Next, Captain James N. Wallace sold his hardware store at the depot and bought into the firm, which then read McAndrew, Clarke & Wallace, and spread from the first floor at 125 into the second floors of 123-125-127 W. Michigan. During this period, William was making furniture at Rawsonville (chairs, lounges, rockers, mattresses, bed-room and dining-room pieces), and Tom was making daily trips by horse and wagon carrying this furniture, white or unfinished, in to Ypsilanti and taking lumber back with him. Tom also worked as upholsterer for this firm. The firm dissolved after ten years, in 1876, due to factory production and changes in freight rates.

In 1840, Captain Stanley and David Coon were handling furniture, and George McElcheran worked for them as finisher and salesman, although primarily a chair-maker. Coon sold out, in 1872, to Harrison Vinkle, who also had a store in Dexter. McElcheran was left in charge of the Ypsilanti store, and built up such a fine trade that he soon bought a half interest. Vinkle's Dexter store was also prospering so much that he sold his interest in the Ypsilanti firm to Tom McAndrew, on August 10, 1876. Thus the McAndrew name continued in the furniture business after a break of only a few months. McElcheran was the undertaker and McAndrew the furniture man, doing upholstering and repairing as well as selling. The firm name of McAndrew and McElcheran was so long and awkward and wasted so much ink in the writing, the First National Bank shortened it to Mack & Mack, which was so practical, it stuck. In 1905, McElcheran retired; and in 1906 "T.W.'s" son, Atwood R., came into the firm. Since my father's retirement in 1939, I myself have been Mack & Mack.

*Ypsilanti's second octagon house still stands at 915 Washtenaw Ave.

COMSTOCK'S DRY-GOODS STORE
By Donald F. Comstock

I have been asked to speak about dry-goods merchandizing in Washtenaw County. Most of the information I have has been told to me by my father, and concerns chiefly the connection of my family with the business.

My grandfather, Nathan Comstock, came to Michigan in 1832 from near Binghampton, New York State. He took up land from the government in the southeastern part of Ypsilanti township. Later he moved to Ypsilanti and purchased the property where the city market is now located. It was while my grandparents were living there that my father, Charles F. Comstock, was born in 1852, the youngest of 12 children.

One of my father's brothers, Edgar Comstock, about twenty years older than my father, was the first member of our family to enter the retail business. It was during the Civil War that he and Mr. Williams opened a dry-goods store in Ypsilanti. The two partners went to New York and purchased their stock. Before they could get the stock ready to open the store for business, the prices were advancing so fast, due to war conditions, that they twice remarked the selling prices to a higher level. It appears there was a period of inflation during that war too.

Most of the dry-goods business of that time was in yard goods. The best customers were the farmers, who would only occasionally come to town. It was the custom for the farmer's wife to buy many yards of cotton and woolen cloth to make clothes for the whole family from underwear to dresses. Ready-made garments had not been produced and knit underwear not yet thought of. Shawls were the usual wrap for women, heavy or light weights for the different seasons. The farmers brought in eggs and dried apples which they sold or exchanged, and once a year would balance up their accounts at the stores.

It was customary for merchants to make a trip to New York City both in the spring and the fall to buy merchandise. When these trips were first started, transportation on the streets of New York was by horse-drawn buses. My father continued these trips long enough to see the coming of horse-drawn street-cars, cable cars, elevated trains, subways, and motor buses.

In 1901 he stopped at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, and I have a letter which he wrote to my mother from New York. He tells about the wonderful electrical displays, saying "there are millions of electric lights." He speaks of seeing President and Mrs. McKinley, and of being just about t enter the Temple of Music when President McKinley was shot, and of the excitement which followed.

When my father became old enough he went to work for his brother in the store, and after gaining experience decided to enter business for himself, which he did, opening a general store in East Tawas, Michigan, about sixty years ago. This was during the lumbering days

and most of the business came from people connected with the lumber industry and from Indians.

The only transportation was by lake boat or overland stage, so that all goods had to be shipped in during the navigation season. Many interesting stories have been told me in regard to this period which was to last only a few years, when, because of the poor health of his brother, my father came back to Ypsilanti to take charge of the store here. He continued in the dry-goods business with different partners and in different locations, until 1929. These changes were about as follows: First, it was F. M. Beall, C. F. Comstock, & Wilcox, on N. Washington Street; then only Beall & Comstock at 61-63 N. Huron Street; about 1907 it became Comstock and Becker (Charlie J.), in the location that was to last as long as the store itself, 128 W. Michigan Avenue; about 1915 Becker left the firm, and the name C. F. Comstock Dry Goods Company included my father and myself as partners. It was in 1909 that I joined my father, after finishing high school and working for a short time in a drug store.

During these years many changes have come and gone. I remember, for example, when carpeting came by the yard and was cut and sewn to fit the room and then tacked down to the floor; next came room-sized rugs, and now many people are having carpets made very much the same as they did years ago. Long black stockings for both boys and girls in the winter, and underwear with long sleeves and long legs were common. I wonder what the youngsters of today would think of them. Furnace-heated houses, washing machines, automobiles, and other modern things have had their effect on the needs and desires as well as the buying habits of the public.

I would like to mention two happenings which I will never forget. They occurred soon after I started working in the store, while still an inexperienced youngster. Great was my embarrassment when a lady asked to see some "drawers," and I had to take boxes from the shelves and lay out on the table both open and closed styles. I can still remember how red my face became. The other occasion was one which pleased me very much. A lady and her two daughters, who lived at Sheldon, came in one day and asked to see winter coats. I sold the mother and each of the daughters some of the best coats we had, as well as many other articles. This one sale amounted to more than the sales of the whole store for the usual business day.

H. R. SCOVILL LUMBER COMPANY
By Herbert A. Bisbee

Early in the year 1870, Joseph Follmor and Henry Scovill formed a partnership for the purpose of engaging in the lumber business. Mr. Follmor had $1000 and Mr. Scovill mortgaged his home for $700, which sums constituted their capital. They rented what has since been known as Frog Island where a lumber yard had been previously , and when a saw mill and planing mill were already established, but not being used at that time. It was rented from William Deubel, Sr., who then ran the flour mill on East Cross Street, on the east bank of the Huron River. At present Anderson & Deck run a gas station here.

Frog Island was formed by the river on the west and the mill race on the east, and extended from East Cross Street on the south to East Forest Avenue on the north. The water from the race furnished power to run the saw mill and the flour mill when there was enough water. Sometimes during the summer months the water was very low, and at such times the flour mill had priority according to the contract, so the lumber company had to do most of their sawing during the fall, winter, and spring months.

In those days there was plenty of standing timber in this area, whitewood, basswood, oak, maple, beech, ash, walnut, and hickory. As soon as sleighing came in the winter the farmers would start drawing in logs, and by spring the east bank of the race would be piled high the full length with thousands of feet of logs. A great many of the logs were bought by Follmor and Scovill for their own use, but some were sawed into lumber for the people who brought them in. When the logs were piled on the east bank of the race, they could be rolled down into the water and floated to the mill, where they were drawn up a tram-way into position to be rolled onto the saw-carriage. The saw used in this mill was known as a mully saw. It stood perpendicular and worked up and down, making the cut on the downward stroke like a jig-saw. After the logs were drawn up into the mill one man could operate it alone, sawing about 5000 feet a day.

In the early days, white pine, outside of the local lumber, was the main building material and had to be shipped in from the north. It was used for everything about a building from joist to the interior casings, and before cedar came in was even used for shingles. Traveling salesmen were unheard of in those early days, so when the firm wanted white pine lumber, Mr. Scovill had to go up north to the saw mills and buy what was needed. The north in those days meant Flint, Saginaw, Bay City, and other towns along the Saginaw valley. He went by train as far as possible and then hired a livery rig to complete the trip out to the mills. The lumber was shipped in the rough on open flat cars, each car carrying about 10,000 feet. Now some of our large trucks will carry that much, and we receive from 30,000 to 40,000 feet in a box car. Flat cars are never used for lumber nowadays, except for very long timbers, longer than cars, which are loaded on two flat cars coupled together.

There were no planing mills in conjunction with the saw mills in the north during these early times, so all lumber was shipped in the rough and had to be worked into shiplap, flooring, siding, casing, base, stool, etc., after it reached its destination. Consequently every locality of any size had to have a planing mill with the necessary machinery to work the lumber into the finished product. Follmor & Scovill's planing mill was located on the west side of the island directly east of the old Woolen Mill, and got its power from the dam which ran across the river to the Woolen Mill. A portion of the power from this dam was controlled by the Deubels and the balance by the Woolen Mill Company. Sometime during the 1890's, Mr. Scovill bought Mr. Follmor out and continued the business by himself.

During the time he was located on the island, he had had considerable trouble with high water and floods causing inconvenience and loss of more less lumber which sometimes reached serious proportions. So he decided to look around for a suitable location on high ground to be used whenever he decided to move. He hesitated to leave the water power, which was very cheap compared with steam, and he hadn't had any experience with electricity. But in the spring of 1903 or 1904, the high water broke down the head gates of the race and the water poured down the race from the river, overflowing the banks across the island in such volume that it washed thousands of feet of lumber down the river, and his men had to be taken off in a boat. Mr. Scovill was the last man to leave and the swift current overturned the boat, giving him a good ducking in ice water. He immediately decided to move and began erecting his mill and sheds on the present location, at the corner of North Huron and Jarvis Streets, where he continued to conduct his business until his death, about the middle of October, 1929, completing practically sixty years of continuous lumber business in the same town.

HISTORY OF THE KING AND LAMB GROCERY STORE
By Charles King Lamb

The founding of the King Grocery Store in 1838 followed the settling of Ypsilanti by only fifteen years. At the time there were about 120 houses in the village. Many log structures remained but among them were ambitious edifices of stone, brick, or frame construction.

The food problem was often a pressing one and much reliance was of necessity placed upon wild game. At first all groceries were brought from Detroit. The road was almost impassable to an ox team and it sometimes took three days to make the thirty-mile trip. For years after its opening, the Detroit road ran through seas of mud and over miles of jolting corduroy; no teamster thought of leaving home without an axe and log chain to cut poles to pry his wagon out of the mud. For a time the road was so impassable that travellers had to come from Detroit by way of Plymouth and Dixboro. For visiting and trading, settlers gladly endured a twenty or thirty-mile ride over bottomless roads. As early as 1829, settlers in the St. Joseph valley journeyed 150 miles to Ypsilanti to get a few rolls of wool carded at Mark Norris' mill, to buy a little tea and dry-goods, or replenish the whiskey barrel. The transportation of heavy freight was dependent on the Huron River; flat-bottom boats were poled up the river to the Rawsonville Landing, some getting through as far as Ypsilanti.*

The King Store was founded by George King on New Year's Day, 1838, on the site where the Schaible Garage recently stood on East Michigan Avenue. Mr. King and his two sons had come to this country from England in the latter years of his life. For a year previous to the founding of the store, George King operated the Stack House, an hotel founded by a Mr. Stackhouse several years earlier. I have often wished that I had a picture of this original store and knew how they conducted their business under all the existing handicaps. In 1840 the store was moved to a frame building at 101 West Michigan Avenue, where it remained until 1858, when the present building was erected. During the construction of the new building business was conducted around the corner on South Huron Street, where the Barker Electric Shop now stands.

Charles and Edward King, sone of George King, took over the business from their father, and were partners under the firm name of C. & E. King. Edward later withdrew, and Charles King and his son, Charles E. King, were partners under the name of King & Son. Charles King passed away in 1883; John G. Lamb entered the business in 1887, and the firm name was changed to Charles King & Co. Charles E. King and John G. Lamb operated under this firm name until the death of Charles E. King in 1913; the same year Charles King Lamb entered the business and the firm name was then changed to John G. Lamb & Son. John Lamb was in the store for fifty-three years, until his death in July, 1926.

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*The picture of early life drawn in the first two paragraphs is largely taken from H. C. Colburn's "The Story of Ypsilanti," 1923.

In the early days it was the custom for farmers to bring their produce to the store to trade. Due bills were then issued for the cash transactions and the buyers, in turn, used them as negotiable paper in making other purchases in the village. At the end of the year the merchants met to settle up their accounts; in fact, merchants' accounts with each other were balanced only once a year. Charles King & Co. was the first store to start cash transactions; that is, they closed each deal instead of allowing credits and debits to continue for a period of time.

Nearly everything was sold in bulk and there were no canned fruits or vegetables. Coffee was sold in the green berry and later roasted in the home. The main staples at this time were flour, which was often sold by the barrel, sugar, tea, coffee, soap, and potatoes; also a complete line of bulk seeds, lime and cement, the latter being purchased by the car load. Common barrel salt was also purchased by the car load and was the only kind used at that time. The original account book of the store, dating back to 1838, shows a wide range of commodities; among these are hay, spring wheat, buckwheat, cigars, venison (indicating that deer meat was not uncommon), also poultry, pork, whitefish, beer and whiskey. The King store always aged their own cheese. They would purchase about one hundred cheese, which came packed in thirty-pound molds, open them periodically, grease them on top and bottom and then turn them. This process was continued for from four to six months, until the cheese were ready to sell. Cider was purchased in barrels and held until it turned into vinegar; the third floor of the store was used for the storage of these barrels of cider vinegar. Dairy butter was another item of which a very large volume was sold. The buying of butter was a great problem because no farmer's wife wanted to be told that hers was not up to par. In fact the store, in its efforts to be tactful, sometimes purchased butter when they knew it would have to be sold to the packers for a few cents a pound. To be a good butter-tester was quite an art and a store-keeper prided himself on his ability to distinguish good butter. The process used to keep dairy butter sweet was to place a layer of cheese-cloth on top, then cover with a layer of salt, about a half inch, then another layer of cheese-cloth. A paper was then tied tightly over the top and the crocks packed in barrels and placed in the basement. This process would keep it sweet for several months.

Even more recently, the store handled wash-boards, lamps, wicks, chimneys and burners. The only laundry soap available was yellow soap in bars, and sal-soda was the only water-softener; blueing came only in quart bottles, not the concentrated type of today. Black pepper came in 150-pound barrels, and the old-fashioned cracker-barrel containing Vale & Crane crackers was a regular store feature. Pickels came in 50-gallon casks and molasses only in 60-gallon barrels to be sold in bulk. Lamb & Son was the only store to continue the sale of molasses in bulk, and people would come from as far as Detroit to get it.

The Civil War Period was a very difficult time for the store. As in the wars since then, prices soared very high and price adjustments following caused many difficulties. Revenue stamps were used

to tax many commodities. I might add that, a good many years afterward during a cleaning-out process, two bushels of invoices on which revenue stamps had been placed were offered for sale at $5 a bushel. A man bought the two bushel for $10, and later realized over $2000 from their sale.

One of the difficulties of merchandizing in the early days was the lack of containers, boxes or bags. Cornucopias were used in handling some bulk goods. I can imagine the difficulties encountered in wrapping up twenty pounds of sugar or salt. I have heard that housewives had specially-made sugar containers which they took to the store to have filled.

King & Co. had its own delivery service which, in the beginning, was very difficult to operate. As there were only 25 telephones in the city, boys went from house to house by bicycle to take orders, which were later delivered. When the delivery-man had finished his trip he would spend the balance of his time working in the store. The Merchants' delivery was started about 1910, and was a cooperative effort on the part of the merchants to give better service at a lower cost. This was successfully operated until 1933, at which time it had to be taken over by the individual stores. Before the days of automobiles, which enable people to go to the country and do much of their own buying, the volume of store buying was in much larger quantities. During this period, the Dunlap Store joined us in purchasing car-load lots of peaches, stone ware, salt and sugar. My father used to go to the store at four o'clock when a car-load of peaches had arrived in order to get them in shape to sell.

At the time John G. Lamb went into the store, the wages paid were $3 a week, in contrast to the present wages of from $40 to $50 a week. Up to 1920, store hours were from 5:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and midnight on Saturdays. On holidays, stores were always open until noon. This is quite a contrast to the comparatively short hours of stores now-a-days, seldom open more than 9 to 6.

The policy of the store was always cleanliness and orderliness but not until after 1920 was any effort necessary for display. The windows were more or less used for holding bulk containers to relieve congestion in the store. From 1920 to 1925 more attention was given to windows and they were used really to display merchandise. In 1925 new fixtures were introduced which were to revolutionize the grocery business; display was the new element; counters in front of the shelves were removed and price tags placed on each item. This enabled the customer to examine the merchandise and know its cost. The Lamb store was remodelled, adopting these new ideas, in 1929. This new era was largely brought about by the chain-stores who were masters in the art of mass display. They forced the service stores to be on their toes every minute; the problem was to buy in large enough quantities to get the best possible prices in order to meet the competition of the chain-stores. The service store prices were unfairly compared to the chain-store prices without sufficient allowance being made for the service rendered. Telephone, delivery service, and

charge accounts were costly items of expense. It was quite rare after this time for a store to have 100% of its customer's business; the housewife would take advantage of the week-end specials at the chain-store and then have her daily delivery from the service store on possibly very small items. It is an interesting conjecture whether, after these hectic days of wartime buying, the busy housewife and tired war-plant worker, now spending hours over her shopping and carrying all of the merchandise herself, will wish to return to the service type of store where she can telephone in her order and, luxury of luxury, have it deposited for her on her own kitchen table. The swing may be again to this type of store.

The John G. Lamb & Son Grocery Store was closed out in July, 1942, completing nearly one hundred and four years of service to four generations or more of Ypsilantians and their rural neighbors. Miss Julia Stevens, who has just passed away at the age of one hundred years, had been a continuous customer of the store for eighty-four of the one hundred and four years of its life.

Ypsilanti, Michigan
April 25, 1944

Erratum: Washtenaw Impressions, 1944, No. 4, p.5, first paragraph should read "the Northwest Company, organized in the 1780's."